

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-17

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 EA-11 EUR-25 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

USIA-12 NIC-01 OMB-01 RSR-01 /123 W

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R 232300 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3802

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 1372

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, CS

SUBJ: SAN JOSE PRESS REPORTS FIGUERES TRAVELING TO
PRC AND USSR

BEGIN SUMMARY: LA NACION FRONTPAGED REPORT THAT
PRESIDENT FIGUERES WOULD VISIT THE SOVIET UNION AND
CHINA FROM JUNE 25 TO JULY 9. THE REPORT WAS APPARENTLY
BASED ENTIRELY ON A CHINESE NEWS SERVICE (SINJUA) STORY,
AND FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIALS AND MRS. FIGUERES HAVE
PRIVATELY DENIED THAT ANY SUCH TRIP IS
SCHEDULED. END SUMMARY.

1. LA NACION REPORTED IN CONSIDERABLE DETAIL THIS MORNING,
APRIL 23, THAT PRESIDENT AND MRS. FIGUERES TO VISIT THE
SOVIET UNION JUNE 25-30 AND CHINA JULY 1-9. THE REPORT,
WHICH WAS BASED ON A CHINESE NEWS AGENCY (SINJUA) REPORT,
SAID THE PRESIDENT WOULD BE ACCOMPANIED BY FOREIGN MINISTER
AND MRS. FACIO, MINISTER OF PUBLIC SECURITY VALVERDE VEGA,
MINISTER OF EDUCATION GOMEZ, MINISTER OF CULTURE CANAS,
AND JOSE RAFAEL CASTILLO ZAMORA.

2. THE LA NACION REPORT NOTED THAT OF THE PRC NEWS MEN
RECENTLY IN COSTA RICA, TWO WERE FROM THE SINJUA AGENCY
THAT ORIGINATED THE REPORT. IT ADDED THAT THESE JOURNALISTS
HAD MET WITH PRESIDENT FIGUERES AND INVITED HIM TO VISIT
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CHINA.

3. LA NACION'S COVERAGE OF THIS STORY HAS CAUSED CONCERN AND SOME BEWILDERMENT IN PRIVATE AND OFFICIAL CIRCLES HERE. EARLIER REPORTS OF A POSSIBLE TRIP THAT HAD BEEN CARRIED ON RADION WERE CATEGORICALLY DENIED BY THE MINISTRY OF THE PRESIDENCY ON APRIL 18. THE MINISTRY SAID FIGUERES CURRENTLY ONLY HAD PLANS FOR ONE VISIT ABROAD, TO THE UNITED STATES MAY 1-12. MRS. FIGUERES, MOREOVER, TOLD THE AMBASSADOR TODAY THAT THERE ARE NO PLANS TO VISIT CHINA OR THE SOVIET UNION. SHE ADDED THAT THIS WAS THE WORK OF

CASTILLO ZAMORA. SEE EMBTEL 1361. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY LIKEWISE DENIED ANY KNOWLEDGE OF A TRIP TO THESE COUNTRIES. A MINISTRY OFFICIAL ADDED THAT CASTILLO WOULD LIKE TO SEE IT HAPPEN AND WAS PUSHING THE IDEA. (CASTILLO ZAMORA IS A COSTA RICA BUSINESSMAN WHO HEADS UP AN UNOFFICIAL OFFICE IN SAN JOSE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF COMMERCIAL CONTACTS WITH THE PRC.)

4. COMMENT: THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT FIGUERES WAS INVITED TO VISIT CHINA BY THE JOURNALISTS AND HE PROBABLY HAS A STANDING INVITATION TO VISIT THE SOVIET UNION. HOWEVER, AS THE LOCAL REACTION TO SUCH A TRIP WOULD LIKELY BE NEGATIVE, FIGUERES WOULD PROBABLY NOT WANT TO TRY IT IN THIS SENSITIVE PRE-ELECTION PERIOD WITHOUT A GOOD FEEL FOR PUBLIC OPINION. THE ECHEVARRIA VISIT TO THE USSR AND CHINA TOGETHER WITH FIGUERES TRIP TO THE STATES MAY HAVE PROVIDED THE RIGHT TIMING FOR A TRIAL BALLOON.
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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts:
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 APR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973SANJO01372
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: SAN JOSE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730448/aaaaiude.tel
Line Count: 93
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17-Jan-2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <11 FEB 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> srp 980127
Subject: SAN JOSE PRESS REPORTS FIGUERES TRAVELING TO PRC AND USSR
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, CS
To: ARA
SECSTATE WASHDC
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005